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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SCEM-02 PC-04

DRC-01 /137 W
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R 201619Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2182

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 10869

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF ROMULO BETANCOURT ON VENEZUELAN
POLITICAL SITUATION

1. I CALLED YESTERDAY ON DOM ROMULO TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS PARTY'S SUCCESS IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS. I FOUND THE FORMER PRESIDENT RELAXED AND HAPPY, DEEPLY TANNED FROM RECENT YACHTING TRIPS AND A LITTLE MORE PLUMP THAN WHEN I LAST SAW HIM.

2. BETANCOURT REITERATED WHAT PRESIDENT-ELECT PEREZ HAS BEEN SAYING, NAMELY, THAT NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE ONE OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND THAT IT WOULD CALL UPON TALENTS OF ALL QUALIFIED VENEZUELANS, NOT LIMITING CHOICE ONLY TO THE PARTY FAITHFUL. LATER IN THE CONVERSATION, BETANCOURT SPOKE WARMLY OF FORMER AMBASSADOR SOSA RODRIGUEZ AND THE PR*SENT AMBASSADOR, ANDRES AGUILAR, WHOM HE RECALLED AS HAVING SERVED AS MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN AN AD CABINET. THIS REFERENCE TO AGUILAR COINCIDED WITH A REMARK MADE TO ME NIGHT BEFORE LAST BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ZAMBRANO, WHO SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT BECAUSE OF HIS MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT, AGUILAR WOULD PROBABLY BE THE PRINCIPAL VENEZUELAN REPRESENTATIVE AT NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE ON LAW OF THE SEA.
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3. REVERTING TO JULIO SOSA, BETANCOURT AGREED WITH MY ESTIMATE
THAT SOSA IS ONE OF THE MOST ABLE, ENERGETIC AND SELFLESS MEN IN
VENEZUELAN PUBLIC LIFE. I GOT STRONG IMPLICATION THAT IF BETANCOURT HAD

ANYTHING TO SAY, SOSA WOULD BE IN LINE FOR AT LEAST THE OFFER OF AN
IMPORTANT POST IN THE NEW PEREZ GOVERNMENT.

4. AS FOR PEREZ HIMSELF, IT WAS CLEAR THAT BETANCOURT ACCEPTED
MY DEFINITION OF "DISCIPLE." IN FACT, AT TIMES DURING A LENGTHY
CONVERSATION, DON ROMULO SPOKE AS IF HE WERE STILL PRESIDENT OF
VENEZUELA. WHEN I FIRST CONGRATULATED HIM AND SAID THAT NOW HE HAD
COME FULL CIRCLE, HIS EYES MISTED OVER AND I COULD SEE HOW EXTREMELY
PROUD AND PLEASED HE WAS AT THE OUTCOME OF EVENTS.

5. BETANCOURT SAID WITH GREAT EMPHASIS THAT A CORNERSTONE OF AD
POLICY HAD ALWAYS BEEN AND WOULD CONTINUE TO BE FREINDSHIP WITH
THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID, "YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO FEAR
FROM US." I REPLIED THAT I WELCOMED THIS ASSERTION AS A STATEMENT OF
SIMPLE TRUTH SINCE, AS BOTH CARLOS ANDRES AND HE KNEW, OUR POLICY
TOWARD VENEZUELA HAD BEEN BASED ON A MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS.
THERE WAS NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT CONTINUE THESE POLICIES
TO JOINT ADVANTAGE IN FUTURE.

6. COMING TO PETROLEUM, BETANCOURT SAID WITH EQUAL
EMPHASIS THAT THERE WOULD BE NO RPT NO DIMINUTION
OF PRODUCTION. I SAID MY GOVERNMENT WOULD WELCOME THIS
STATEMENT BECAUSE OF THE PRESENT ENERGY CRISIS; BUT WE
ALSO WISHED TO LOOK FARTHER INTO THE FUTURE AND TO SIT DOWN
WITH NEW PRESDENT AND HIS ADVISERS IN AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE
HOW BOTH COUNTRIES COULD HELP EACH OTHER IN THE PROPER
UTILIZATION OF VENEZUEL'S ENERGY AND OTHER RESOURCES.
HERE BETANCOURT REPLIED THAT VENEZUELA STILL HAD NEED OF
TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITAL. HE SAW NO DIFFICULTIES IN CONTINUING
AT A GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL TO WORK OUT MUTUAL PROBLEMS.

7. IN A BRIEF CRITIQUE OF PAST ELECTIONS, BETANCOURT
CORRECTED HIMSELF WHEN HE INADVERTENTLY REFERRED TO
THE "ENEMY" AND SAID, NO, HE HAD BETTER SAY "OUR
ADVERSARIES." HE WAS CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE CALDERA/CALVANI
POLICY OF SOFTNESS TOWARD CUBA AND SAID THAT THE NEW AD GOVERN-
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MENT WOULD ONLY CONSIDER AN ARRANGE MENT OF THE CUBAN PROBLEM WITHIN
THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OAS. THERE WOULD BE NO RPT NO UNILATERAL
RECOGNITION OF CASTRO. IN FACT, THE CALDERA/CALVANI POLICY TOWARD
CUBA HAD BEEN ONE OF THE CARDINAL MISTAKES MADE BY THE COPEYANOS
IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS. THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WERE NOT SO STUPID
AS TO BE DECEIVED BY THIS ATTEMPT TO WIN VOTES FROM THE FAR LEFT.
IN FACT, SAID BETANCOURT, EXTREMISTS OF BOTH STRIPES, EITHER FAR
LEFT OR FAR RIGHT, HAD BEEN DECISIVELY BEATEN IN THE RECENT CAMP-

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AIGN. HERE HE MENTIONED WITH SATISFACTION THE DISINTEGRATION OF
THE PEREZJIMENISTA MOVEMENT.

8. ON TAKING MY DEPARTURE, BETANCOURT SAID HE WOULD LIKE
TO SET UP AN INTIMATE DINNER NEXT MONTH FOR MRS. MCCLINTOCK AND
MYSELF, TO WHICH THE OTHER GUESTS WOULD BE PRESIDENT-ELECT CARLOS
ANDRES PEREZ AND HIS WIFE--PLUS MARION STEWART, THE WIDOW OF
FORMER AMBASSADOR ALLAN STEWART.

9. WE HAD INDEED COME FULL CIRCLE.
MCCLINTOCK

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